

1Tim 24-01-28b

We're in 1st Timothy chapter 3 and we have come now to this final section, having seen the importance and the central issue of our character, having genuine Christian character as the primary emphasis, the goal, the means by which everything else is done. It's not a concomitant, it's not an add-on, it's not an also-ran, it is the means. And regardless of motive and opportunity, if we don't understand the means, what we do is not going to redound to the praise and glory of God.

It has to be done in His way, by His strength. And developing these traits of character is something that happens through a good conscience, a sincere faith, as we saw in verse 5 of chapter 1. I think I said 9 in the first session, I meant verse 5. A pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith. These are inner qualities that we develop through the Word and through the Spirit.

And the chapter now moves forward, Paul's thought moves forward to this section, verses 14 through 16. These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly, but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God. And this is a little bit of a strange turn, isn't it? Because here Paul is describing to Timothy the qualities that are desirable and necessary for leadership and service and function in the group, in the fellowship of believers.

And then he doesn't say, so now you know how overseers and deacons and women ought to conduct themselves. He says how you ought to conduct yourself. And it's just a little bit odd.

And what people have done is say, well, Timothy as the pastor is the one that has to guarantee that these standards are met by the elders and by the deacons. And they'll read quite a bit into this second person singular pronoun. But if you look at this, and we're just going to spend a moment looking at the Greek of this particular verse here, when it says how you ought to conduct yourself, this is the word *dei*, D-E-I, and it's the word that means must, obligation.

It is necessary. We are bound to give thanks for you. We are bound.

We must, *dei*, same word in that passage. But this is, when you parse it, this is a present active indicative. This is ongoing action in present time.

It's viewed as something that ought to be persistent and ongoing, but it is a third person singular. You know about persons. First person is me.

Second person is you. Third person is them, they. And the singular can be he, she, or it, or one.

And the proper translation in this section, and I don't know why the new King James

changes it here, but this should read, and you need to correct it to understand it, how one ought to conduct himself with him being in the old way we used to use the masculine to cover everybody. When you say the sons of Israel, you're talking about the children of Israel. But, or if you want to be more politically correct, how one ought to conduct one's self.

But this is ought in the third person singular. And instead of saying how they ought to conduct themselves, and we've got a lot of emphasis on pronouns and what are your pronouns and sensitivity about gender and all that. But however you want to translate this for yourself, however one wants, and notice how I said, you translate it for yourself.

We say, this is how you skin a raccoon. This is how you start a fire. And when I say you, I'm talking about, this is how one ought to do it.

And that's the sense of the you translation here. How you, the reader, if you will, or how do you get your car out of the driveway? How do you skin a cat? Whatever it is, that's the kind of you this is. And to be really proper and catch the sense, I have changed this in my Bible so that you will know, this is Timothy.

And so that you may know that is the second person singular. How you, Timothy, and Timothy needs to know this. And there is the idea that Timothy as the leader of the group in Ephesus is ultimately responsible for this taking place.

Why does Timothy need to know this? Is he actively going to be involved in selection of all the other elders and the appointment of deacons? Perhaps, but he is also the one that is going to communicate and pass on. Timothy is the communicator and he's got to know it so that he can show it. He's got to understand it so that he can communicate it.

And Paul says, I'm hoping I can be there. Why is that line even in here? I'm writing this to you. I hope to come to you shortly, but if I'm delayed, you need to know this.

So what if Paul is not delayed? When you compare this with Titus, and it seems likely that first Timothy and Titus were written at about the same time to two different groups with two different pastors. Second Timothy is going to come much later. And we are going to cover these pastoral epistles in that order.

First Timothy, Titus, Second Timothy, that's the order in which they were manifestly written. But Paul says, if I'm delayed, I'm writing so that you may know. Well, that's a subjunctive, that's a potential mood.

And if Paul is not delayed and is able to come, what would happen? Well, Paul is not going to be the ongoing presence in the church in Ephesus, but he would be able to communicate these things in person. Paul is an apostle. He is sent forth to preach the gospel, to preach the truth, to reveal the mystery of faith and practice in this age.

And Paul would reveal these things to the assembled group himself. But if he is delayed, he wants Timothy to know them, how one ought to conduct oneself, because these are things that everybody in the group should know. They need to be known, first of all, by the communicator, revealed to the communicator.

Paul is the steward of these mysteries, holding the mystery of the faith. Paul can reveal it, or Paul can reveal it to Timothy in writing, and Timothy can preach it. But it needs to be known to everyone.

Is this guy doing a good job as an overseer or as a deacon? Anybody in the church will know because the standards have been communicated. So I write to you, although I hope to be there in person to transmit and to emphasize. But if I'm delayed, you need to know.

I want you to know. I'm writing so that you may know. You, Timothy, second person, singular, how one ought, third person, singular, one ought, one overseer, one deacon, one woman, one man, one believer in the fellowship, ought to, and we say conduct oneself.

There's not a reflexive pronoun here. This is an infinitive, which means to conduct. It basically means to behave.

The best and simplest translation is how one ought to behave. Your conduct is your behavior, right? And to avoid having to implicate or put in a pronoun that's not in the original, so that you may know how one ought to behave, ought to reflect character, ought to function in the house of God, in the house of God. We in this day immediately think, well, it's the church house.

I mean, even we've been a house church for I can't even count how many years, but don't you, you know, house of God, don't you immediately envision a white clapboard building with a steeple and a bell or something? The house of God, well, it's the church building. That's not what it's talking about. What is the house of God? Well, this is the group.

These are the individuals and the group. It is the invisible house. And you remember these passages, first Corinthians 3.16. Do you not know that you are the temple of God? You are the house of God and the spirit of God dwells in you.

You are the temple of God. And this is second person, plural, y'all. They would say in Texas or up here in the South, you all, y'all.

I've mentioned this before. And in some ways I mourn the loss of some of the distinctions that characterized earlier versions of the English language. In the King James, you is plural and thee and thou are singular.

I pray thee. If you came to a group, you would say, I pray you. But you in King James represents the plural in the original, thee and thou represents the singular.

Well, we don't say thee and thou anymore, but when people used to pray back in the 1960s, when I was doing my growing up, you'd hear somebody praying in public and they prayed in King James English. And it sounds a little old-fashioned now, but Lord, we thank thee for thy mercy. We pray that thou wilt.

And we just lapse into King James English. It just seems appropriate that if God is speaking to me in King James, I'm going to speak back to him in King James. And with our more modern translations, that has largely fallen out of use.

But think about the fact that we ask for thy, thee, thou, thy, it's singular. We're talking to God, the three in one, and we're talking to the father. We pray to the father in the name of the son and in the power of the spirit.

And so we address him in the singular. So, but this in, do you not know that you, you all are the temple of God and the spirit of God dwells among you, dwells in your midst, you plural. That's 1 Corinthians 3, 16.

We have a similar idea in 2 Corinthians 6, 16. What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. You all are the temple of the living God.

As God has said, and it becomes more clear as you hear the old Testament quote, I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God and they shall be my people. You are the temple of the living God.

So in that context, do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. What fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? What communion has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? What part has a believer with an unbeliever? And this is really a faithful person with a faithless person. It's not really salvation status that is in view.

It is the practice of being defined by your faith, measuring yourself by your faith that is held with a good conscience, as we see in our passage. What part, what portion, what truck, we would say, does a faithful person have with a faithless person? How long can you maintain any kind of a close relationship with doesn't share your goals and values and priorities, ours having been defined by the Word of God and the Spirit of God, and our status and standing in Christ, our function, our expectation, our future, our standard that what we do, we do heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men because we want to reflect the glory of God. We want to be useful.

We want to vindicate the work of Christ in saving us and delivering us and equipping us. Somebody that doesn't have any of that as a part of their thinking, how close can you

really be? And as Paul says, bad company corrupts good morals. The colloquial proverb is, if you put a bad apple in a barrel, the good apples don't turn the bad apple good.

The good apples are going to be spoiled by the juice that leaks from the bad apple. Unless you are the Lord Jesus Christ, if you come in contact with something unclean, you are defiled. Being a believer, we don't touch the unclean and it gets sanctified.

Only the Lord Jesus can do that. And for individuals in our periphery, we cannot sanctify them by our contact much as we wish we could. We can have a winning example.

We can have a hope that is so manifest that people will ask us the reason for that hope that is in us and be ready to give that answer. But it isn't our pressure. It isn't our trying to hook someone like a fish and land them for Christ.

We can't do that. We have to walk the road that God has put before us and hope that the reflected glory of God will shine unto them. Let your light so shine before men that they will see your good works, your conduct, your faith and manner of life and will be drawn to and glorify your Father in heaven.

We are in a passive mode of being used by God to draw those who are willing to seek. Seek Him and find Him when they search for Him with all their heart just as we have. And you can't hand that and hand it to somebody and say, just guzzle that down.

You'll think like me. You'll believe like me. Please, just down this.

Take my word for it. Here, let me put this in your hand. Let me tip it to your lips.

Let me pull you by the hair of your head and tip your face so I can pour this in. It is antithetical to everything that God has purposed. We are creatures of free choice by design.

That is the image of God. We are not the image of God in righteousness. We are not the image of God in power.

We are not the image of God in glory. We are the image of God in that we are free agents and we choose. There is a little God-like ability to pick our own destiny, decide our own goals and values and priorities.

That is a little piece of sovereignty. It is the image of God. It is like God in the sense that it is self-determining and I can't determine for anybody but me.

So we are as a group, as a fellowship. It's not a building. It isn't even what goes on in a meeting or an assembly or a congregation or a confabulation of believers.

It is the ongoing fabric of our unity, our prayer for one another, our concern and care, our opportunities to put a shoulder under and bear one another's burdens even as we

endeavor to shoulder our own load, our care and concern, our works of service, these character qualities in 1 Timothy 3 as we have opportunity to love one another, be tenderhearted, forgiving of one another even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us. That is the household. That is the family.

When we are the house of God, this is why we have the term brethren, brothers and sisters in Christ. This is our family and this is the glue that holds us together. That is the house.

It's the household. And you see that in so many passages. So, of course, in 1 Corinthians 6.19, do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? And in that passage, you have the plural as well.

Second person plural. Y'all's body. You could argue that, well, he's talking to the group about their individual bodies, but even in this passage, your body is plural.

Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you. And that is also plural, who is in you all. And so there is one of those both and ideas here.

It is both your individual body, take care of it, be a good steward of it, and the body of which we are a part, the body of Christ. Your body, we talk about the, you know, when the body of Congress meets to vote and discuss legislation and so on, or, you know, the whole group meets as a body. Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in or among you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own.

All of these are plural. Every one of those use is plural. You were bought at a price, plural.

Therefore glorify God in your body, plural, and in your spirit, plural, which are God's. Both our individual body and our collective fellowship doesn't belong to us. It belongs to God, and we should honor it as such and respect and treat it with good stewardship, take care of it.

So those are your parallel passages, if you will, about what it is to regard the house. How should one conduct himself? How should one behave in the house of God, in the fellowship with respect to brothers and sisters and fathers and mothers in Christ? The elders are the parent figures. The ones kind of at our same level of service and function, those are our brothers and sisters.

And depending on perspective, it can be both. We had a discussion, Patty and Elizabeth are going through a Bible study, and you have these cases where the elders of Israel climb partway up Mount Sinai and have a meal in the presence of God, and there's the glassy sea and the throne and so on, and they see God. And yet you have other passages that say, no man can see God and live.

Paul, after the Lord Jesus has come and gone, the Lord Jesus says, if you've seen me, you have seen the Father. He talks to Thomas in the upper room about this same idea. I and my Father are one.

You've seen me, you've seen the Father. In him is the fullness of deity manifest in bodily form. And yet, have you seen God or have you not seen him? Both things can be true, right? Because there is an element of visibility.

There is an aspect of God that is revealed. Did Moses see God when God's glory passed by the Lord? Merciful, righteous, reserving mercy for thousands, and judgment down to the third generation of those who hate him and a thousand generations of those who love him and serve him. I'm paraphrasing very loosely here, but remember, Moses said, show me your glory, and God said, it would kill you.

But you hide in the cleft of the rock, I'll put my hand over you, I'll pass by, and you can look and see the departing glory, the afterglow. So did Moses see God or not? Well, yes and no. No man can see me and live, but you will see my glory.

You will see a revelation. You will see an aspect. Did the elders camping and eating a meal by the shore of the glassy sea, did they see God? Well, yes and no.

Did Ezekiel see God when he says, I saw the Lord high and lifted up, surrounded by the cherubim and wheels within wheels and fiery stones and seraphim? And well, did he see him or did he not? Yes, he did. And no, he didn't. There is a revelation of God that no man can see and live, that no one has seen any time.

Jesus said, no one knows the father, but the son, and no one can know the father, but those to whom the son reveals him. But that tells us that if you listen to the Lord Jesus's revelation, which includes his delegation of that revelation to the apostles, then you can know what no man knows. Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, neither has entered into the heart of the man the things that God has prepared for those who love him, but we have it revealed, Paul says in the next verse, by the Holy Spirit.

So eye has not seen, ear has not heard, hasn't entered into the heart, but it is revealed to us. So has no man seen, has no man imagined, has it never entered into a heart? There is an aspect of it that's true, but then there is also the revelation. So it's both end.

So within the household of faith, within the body of Christ, in some ways, we are brothers and sisters. In some ways, there are fathers and mothers and children. Paul tells one of the churches, I begat you, and that's a mother figure.

He says, you have many communicators, but you don't have many fathers in Christ. And he says, I'm your father. In another case, he says, I'm your mother.

I begat you, I birthed you. And what element is in view? And this is important because

when we look at our relationships, there are times when we have the opportunity to be of benefit to those that would be older elders. They're a father or a mother in Christ and their days of service have been fulfilled and they're in the twilight period.

Well, we use the principles of honoring our father and mother that our days may be long in the land and render the honor and the service that one would give to a parent. There are other relationships within the fellowship, within the body of Christ that are more parallel. And we do what we would do for our brother or our sister.

There are some relationships, someone who is new to the faith, who is a neophyte, as Paul talks about here. And we understand our role always in humility, always with respect, always with an eye on the fact that we are being evaluated for how we accomplish these goals and fulfill these opportunities. But there are times when people call it being a mentor, but you're basically in the father or mother role.

And someone is young enough in the faith or inexperienced enough in this particular circumstance that we offer fatherly or motherly guidance that isn't really so much on a parallel. And if they are wise, and if they have the necessary humility, they will recognize that they are hearing from someone who knows. This is the idea of being an apprentice in earlier days.

And even today, when you do an internship, you're looking to those who know more than you do and watching them and gaining experience by watching someone do it right and implement their wisdom and their knowledge and their experience. And you absorb that by, in a sense, looking upward. If you are the person teaching the apprentice, this is Paul's role with Timothy.

I hope to come, but if I'm not there, here's how to do it. Here's the way it ought to look. Here's how people ought to behave.

And you are ultimately on the hook because you are at a minimum an overseer. And we know when he says, let no one despise your youth, Timothy's not gray headed at this point. And yet he is in the position and he's got to implement this as a father and as an overseer, even though he may not have the years.

It's always awkward. I can remember looking over an entire congregation of white haired, retired missionaries and pastors as a guy in his 30s. And I'm the pastor and I'm the shepherd of a flock of people who are all older and have more years in the faith.

So how do I accomplish that? Well, I need to be wiser in the word and more knowledgeable in the scriptures so that I can impart something that these people with a lot of experience, but maybe not extensive Bible study, don't know and can fit in with their experience. And I have to do it in humility. I can't stand up there and wag my finger at people who are you know, with decades of in the field service to the Lord in

missionary work and in training and such, and to have respect for what they do know and what they have learned by living.

And at the same time, bring something of value that is a part of my function. And in that sense, I first learned this when I was an instructor. I was a first lieutenant and I had captains in my class and I had to ride some of them pretty hard.

I'm a Marine lieutenant and here's a captain, a Marine or Army. And he can't pull rank on me in my classroom because in that environment, instructor outranks what you're wearing on your shoulder or your collar. And I would tell them stuff and they had to submit and obey.

And there is an element of respect and humility and understanding that these are the roles that are being fulfilled. And I can't, captain can't pull rank on me and say, look, I don't want to get this assignment done by Monday. I'm not going to shoot this fire mission.

I'm not going to create this firing chart. I'm a captain, you're a lieutenant. So shut up and quit telling me that.

So we have to be sensitive to the situation. And this is why these character qualities are so important. It is a combination of humility, dedication, and personal spiritual growth that makes these functions possible.

How one ought to conduct himself, how one ought to behave in concert with, in contact with, in fellowship with other believers, because the group is the house of God and not just our formal group that meets for Bible class, any believers in your periphery, these house of God passages apply wherever you go. The believers with whom you are in contact, they don't have to be members of grace and truth or ones who regularly fellowship with us. Believers in your periphery are you and they are the household.

This is why the Lord Jesus can say sort of in an anticipatory fashion, where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst. And if you have contact with a believer and the Lord Jesus is an issue for them, the way he is for you, that's the house of God. And all of these characteristics and standards apply in your family, in your workplace, in your social situations, in your online conversations, comments that you make and leave, people that comment and under stuff that you might post, emails that you send, conversations that you have, believers with whom you rub elbows.

If they are not faithless, in which case there's a different set of standards that apply, what fellowship has light with darkness, Christ with Belial. If there is a believer and they are faithless, that is very limited contact. Avoid intimacy, avoid excessive amounts of time spent.

Be cordial, be kind, be flexible, be mature. Hope that the light within you shines. Don't

try to make it shine.

Just be who you are in Christ. Be careful, be respectful, be humble, but do not cultivate fellowship with even believers that are faithless because believers with whom we are in contact, that's the house of God. Would you want to invite a bunch of perverts into Grace and Truth Church and try to have them engage in listening to Bible class and not arguing with a pronoun I use or a concept that comes from the word of God, being divisive, being disruptive, making things out of order, being critical of people they hear making comments when we're in the fellowship time? We don't do that.

Our fellowship needs to be harmonious and upbuilding and an expression of love and concern and brothers and sisters. It's family time. Well, don't do that individually either.

When you think about what is upbuilding and edifying in Bible class, that is the same principle that applies anytime we're in fellowship. And if someone claims to be a believer, but they are a gossip, they malign, they judge, they don't care about Christ, they don't want to talk about spiritual things, you bring up something you heard or learned or something that struck your heart when you were in reflection and meditation and doing a little bit of devotions or praying or whatever, and that's a turnoff for them and they want to switch the topic, that's time to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit. You as an individual, we as individuals have to remember anywhere we go, if there are two or more, the Lord Jesus is in the midst.

That's the house of God. How should you conduct yourself in the house of God? Do you see how big a mistake it is to take 1 Timothy 3 and say, well, when we go down to the church house, we need to try to elect a deacon and an elder that will do these things. You're the house of God, and these things pertain anytime you're around one or more believers.

It's all the time everywhere for every one of us. These are just different roles that we might be fulfilling in that contact with other believers. I can be with my daughter and I'm in more of an elder role.

She can be with her mother and they can be sisters, depending on the topic, depending on the situation, depending on the conversation. I can be with my brother and he might be in the experienced role and encouraging me in something in more of an elder role, even though I'm older than him. That's just within a family.

Think about the extended reach that we have in contact with other believers. In any given circumstance, any given type of fellowship, one or more of these roles may be in view. We may be able to serve.

We may be able to communicate. We may be able to offer some leadership and some guidance and some oversight formally or informally, but these characteristics always

pertain. Our goal is to cultivate these qualities all the time so that wherever we end up functioning in this paradigm, we're thoroughly equipped for every good work.

This is how one ought to behave in the house of God, which is the assembly of the living God. The living God. It's not a dead faith.

It's not a ritualistic structure. It's not go to the church and follow this order of worship. This is the assembly of the living God.

Jesus is in the the Lord is at hand. Let your moderation be known to all your temperance, your self-control, your fruit of the spirit. The Lord, when it says the Lord is at hand, it doesn't mean he's about to come.

It means he's standing right there. The pillar and ground of the truth. This literally says a pillar and ground of the truth because our fellowship, our contact, our associations, we are not the only pillar.

We are a pillar. Temples in the ancient world were held up by rows of pillars. You look at the ancient ruins in Athens and in Rome, and you see all of those pillars.

We are a pillar. Our particular fellowship, this fellowship in Ephesus, wasn't the only fellowship. That's why Paul's not there.

He's ministering to other pillars, but that group is a pillar and a foundation, and the defining element that permeates and weaves through all of this, enables these character traits to develop and grow, is the truth. The truth of God, the word of God, the mystery of church-age truths that have been revealed through the apostle Paul specifically, amplified and extended in the rest of the New Testament scriptures, but Paul is the steward of the mysteries. Without controversy, great is, here's that word again, great is the mystery of eusebia.

This is what we're going to be looking at next time. What is this mystery, and what does this word godliness mean? Godliness does not begin to catch it, but you have holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience, up in verse 9, and this great mystery, without question, without debate, without controversy, this mystery is great, and now he's going to detail it in this beautiful piece of poetry, possibly the lyrics to a hymn, music so important for worship, and I'll mention next time, there is some testimony to the effect that this may have actually been a hymn lyric, words to a song that was sung in worship, but personal cultivation of these qualities so that we can bless and be blessed in the house of God, in the fellowship with other believers, one or more. Every one of these characteristics applies, no exceptions, no exemptions.

So where do I get them? How does the power of God come into my life as a believer? Cultivate the presence and power of the spirit, marinate myself, soak myself, spend time in meditation and reflection and digestion of the truth of the word of God. Turn the

corner into my personal application. It ought to make a difference.

If I'm not different after exposure to the word of God, there is something wrong with me, because the word of God is alive and powerful, and if it does not wreak change, it's flawed clay. I'm in the hands of the potter, and if I spoil and don't hold the shape, it's not the potter's fault, I'm bad clay. And the great thing about being in the image of God is I can make myself into a vessel of honor instead of dishonor.

I can change, I can decide, I can choose, I set my goals and values and priorities, and I can avail myself of all of the available godly provision, divine grace, divine power. So if there is a failure, there is nobody's neck to hang it around but me. Well, plenty here to think about, but this mystery of godliness is what we'll look at next Sunday.

Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for the gift, the presence and power of your spirit, the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, his intercessory prayer on our behalf. We pray that as we reflect on these truths, that it will become manifest and obvious on how we should then live, and that we can hold with a good conscience the mystery of the faith and fulfill your purpose for us, cultivate and grow these qualities of character in our own souls.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.